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A · Home · at · Menands. ❋

A $3,500 COTTAGE.

[From Fuller & Wheeler's "Artistic Homes."]

MENANDS:

THE GARDEN SUBURB

OF

ALBANY AND TROY.

"Indeed, what more can be desired? A little garden to walk, and immensity to reflect upon. At his feet something to cultivate and gather; above his head something to study and meditate upon; a few flowers on the earth, and all the stars in the sky."—*Victor Hugo.*

BY H. P. PHELPS,
Author of "Players of a Century," and "The Albany Hand-Book."

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A HOME OF YOUR OWN.

THE concert-room was crowded, for the gifted prima-donna was in the full tide of her great popularity. No matter who it was: it might have been Titiens, with a method as grand as the ocean of which she sang; or it might have been Jenny Lind, with a voice more like that of the Seraphim who stand before the Throne than anything we shall hear again on earth; it might have been Parepa, combining in her superb vocalism the excellencies for which all other singers have been praised; it might have been Patti, the perfection and the despair of operatic artists; or it might have been Nilsson, or Nevada, or our own Albani.

You were there and you remember when she sang that grand aria from "Norma," how we shouted and waved our handkerchiefs; and when she gave the Jewel Song from "Faust," how we went wild with delight, and showered upon her bouquets and adulation.

And you remember, too, when at last, in response to a thundering encore, she came to the footlights, and once more lifting up her wonderful voice, discarding entirely the language and methods of grand opera, and of foreign music, she sang:

"'Mid pleasures and palaces though we may roam,
Be it ever so humble, there 's no place like home."

There was no shouting then. The moment of tumult had gone by. The homage which expressed itself in noise had ceased. Even the flowers we laid at her feet could not say all we felt, and then and there, amid silence broken only by the old familiar strain, we rendered, one and all, the tribute of our tears. The triumph was complete; but it was not her's alone. The years go by; her name may have passed from memory, and we may question which of the great artists it was that so moved us, but

"Though we may forget the singer,
We do not forget the song."

There are airs as sweet as the old Sicilian melody which John Howard Payne, strolling one morning through a town in Southern Italy, first heard from the lips of a peasant girl, and, asking her to repeat it, jotted down the notes as near as his limited knowledge of music would admit. There are verses quite as flowing as the words to which the tune was afterwards wedded and that are alone afloat on the sea of forgetfulness which has swept over the great London success of the season of 1823 and washed into oblivion the opera of "Clara; the Maid of Milan." But that one refrain has been sung the same hour by the humblest peasantry in Europe, and in her stateliest palaces. Religion has pressed, in paraphrase, both words and music into her solemn service. It is the sweetest lullaby the mother ever sings. Children learn it next to

"Now I lay me down to take my sleep."

It is the national anthem in the Woman's Kingdom.

And all this simply because the words and music happily combine to express a sentiment so tender, so true and so universal as to confer upon the little song the gift of immortality.

* * *

The home instinct is strong in most men and in all women. It is not confined to human beings. Cats have it; birds come hundreds of miles to find their last year's nests; the shad spawned in the Hudson never makes the mistake of going up the Connecticut to rear her family; the horse, in the hour of peril, will not be driven from its stall, even by the terrors of a conflagration.

"There are many roosts for a man," some one very prettily has said, "but only one nest."

A home means stability. The ideal home means ownership, and taxes, of course, and jury-duty and such like privileges. A rented house may be a home, but at the best it is temporary, and must always be so regarded. A home means associations and memories, some sad, some glad, many tender, and all dear.

But associations will not cling or gather in any shape to any extent when what is your hearth-stone this year may be John Smith's grocery next May, and the room in which your darling died two years ago is this moment a feeding place for a score of half-civilized boarders.

True, thousands are happy in homes which are liable to be

shifted every twelve-month, else the world would be fuller of misery than it is at present; but most persons with anything like "prospects" look forward longingly to a home of their very own.

But a home in the city is not, to people of moderate incomes, so easy of accomplishment. Few of us want to live up an alley, or on a back street, even temporarily; still less desirable is it to locate there as house-owners.

But lots on Quality Row, or near Washington Park, cost round sums of money, to say nothing of the expensive houses necessary to correspond with the neighborhood. Then, taxes are high — $2.06 on every hundred dollars in Albany this year, and that on a full valuation — with assessments for re-paving and for street drains probable. These are what make a home seem impossible to persons having an income of not more than from $1,200 to $2,000 a year. And how many such there are! And what a blessing it would be could some way be devised whereby a comfortable home might for them be made a possibility!

* * *

But why not a home in the suburbs?

That, after all, is admitted to be the perfection of desirable circumstances for those who cannot afford to have both a town and country residence, for it combines the social advantages of the one with the natural blessings of the other. It is this idea that has built up around Boston her famous necklace of villages. It is this that has made the red sands of New Jersey and the barren wastes of Long Island to blossom like the rose, with the surplus population of the Metropolis. Even Philadelphia, preëminently the city of homes, has suburbs made particularly attractive by the far-sightedness of the Pennsylvania Railroad, which offers many inducements to become dwellers on its line.

Love in a cottage, or life in a cottage, no longer means existence in four bare walls where the wealth of roses outside the door ill compensates for the poverty of accommodations within. The cottage home of to-day may be a model of taste and convenience. Even in the suburbs all "modern improvements" are possible — well and cistern water, hot and cold, all over the house; bath-room, water-closet; a furnace heating all the rooms — everything except the high-priced and extravagant gas, can be had the same as in the city. Add to these a garden, a lawn, flower-beds, trees, pure air, bright

sunshine, and plenty of elbow room; all at a less annual outgo for interest, taxes, etc., than is paid for rent in the city; and what a balance of personal comfort there is to be computed in favor of the suburbs!

It must be confessed, however, that in such suburbs Albany is as yet strangely deficient — strange because all about her are building sites that abound with many natural advantages — not so strange when their lack of accessibility is considered.

The first requisite of a suburb, otherwise desirable, is means of access that shall be cheap, quick and frequent.

The suburban resident whose business calls him daily to the city must have sure and convenient methods of conveyance, else the daily journey to and fro becomes a weariness of the flesh.

The advantage of a private conveyance is that it at once affords a thousand places to choose from, for it does not then matter in which direction you live, or whether near the cars or away from them, you are independent; but such conveyance is not only expensive to get, and expensive to maintain; it is many times unsatisfactory and always more or less of a bother. It is very fine, to be sure, in pleasant weather and when one feels like it, to harness the horse and bowl over a good road in the bright sunshine to and from your home; but it is not so agreeable when it must be done every day, in dust, through mud, rain or shine, snow or blow; and always there is the horse to be cared for at both ends of the route.

Stages and horse-cars are some better, many times, but they are often crowded, and always slow; and for genuine comfort and convenience there is nothing to equal the steam cars. They start on time; they get there without exhausting your patience with the road, or your pity for dumb animals; you have a comfortable seat; you are not jammed against a washerwoman, or run over by a coal heaver, or suffocated with foul breath, or choked with tobacco smoke. The horse-car is a necessary of city life; but it is also a necessary evil, and the suburban resident will dispense with it if possible.

When we come to examine the time-tables for the hundred trains which, on half a dozen roads, leave Albany in as many directions daily, we are disappointed to find that with a single exception, there is very little accommodation of this kind for those who would reach the city early in the morning, and leave it late at night, and have opportunity to go to and fro frequently, as occasion may require, during the day.

This happy exception is the well-managed and popular "Belt Line," as it is called, between Albany and Troy, formed by an arrangement between the Delaware & Hudson Canal Company's and the Central-Hudson River railroads, by which cars leave the Union depot every hour from 7 A. M. to 11 P. M., making a continuous circuit, one train in each direction every sixty minutes.

* * *

Upon this Belt Line, three miles and a half north from Albany, on the west side of the river, in the town of Watervliet, is Menands.

The name, intimately and widely associated with flowers and their cultivation, suggests a garden rather than a village, and such it is. And so it appears to the stranger who, in nine minutes after leaving Albany, alights at the pretty station over which the railroad agent, Mr. Augustus B. Lathrop, presides with courtesy and attention. If it is in the summer time, luxurious vines are seen creeping up the sides of the building, while near by are beds of foliage plants and choice flowers selected from the Menand gardens, which lie directly back of the station. Through these and the conservatories the visitor walks, with many exclamations of wonder and delight, for here is gathered the largest, rarest and most valuable collection of cactuses ever brought together in America. Many hundred varieties have been exhibited here at once, and their fame has gone forth throughout the land. They are the particular fancy of the proprietor, Louis Menand, who with his sons, Louis Jr. and Felix, conduct a large floral business here, and at the Rural cemetery, with a branch on State street, Albany.

In front of the station stands the stately Tweddle mansion, in the midst of orderly and well-kept grounds. Across the road is the residence of Mr. J. W. Tillinghast, President of the Merchants' National Bank of Albany. A little to the north, and within five minutes walk, are the State Fair grounds and buildings. Crossing the track at right angles, the Menand road leads from the Troy turnpike up the hill westward to Loudonville, only a mile or so away. On this road, and near by, are handsome villas and pretty cottages which go to make up "Menands," all well kept, well shaded and situated in ample and well arranged grounds. Among those living here are Messrs. John D. Capron, president of the Albany Board of Trade and of the Home Bank; Douglas L. and Walter G. White, lumber dealers; Isaac A. Chapman, Jeremiah Waterman and sons, Joseph A. Lansing

of the firm of Wilson, Lansing & Co., all prominent Albany merchants of high commercial and social standing; Thomas L. Goodwin and his son Albert C. Goodwin, engraver and lithographer; William J. Dickson, a well known grocer; Charles H. Peck, state botanist; Mr. Archibald, of Troy; Mrs. Woolverton; Mr. Andrew W. Woolverton of the firm of Austin & Woolverton, insurance agents; Mr. George H. Ball, of Bradstreet's commercial agency; Mr. Joseph R. Harper, salesman for Fearey & Co.; Mr. H. P. Phelps of the Albany *Times;* Messrs. Charles B. Tillinghast, Albert H. Sliter, James Maxwell, James Gray, Jeremiah Lansing and Mrs. Lyon. Mr. C. W. Little, the law book publisher, and Mr. Dean Sage have handsome residences and spacious grounds further west.

Fruit and shade trees, vines and gardens are everywhere. Not a poor or unsightly house is to be seen. Every thing, without ostentation or vulgar display, indicates thrift, comfort, peace and happiness.

Should the stranger make inquiries he would be told that there are never any houses to rent here; that almost without exception each resident owns his own home, is delighted with it, and would not be hired to live elsewhere, summer or winter.

Should the stranger extend his researches, he would be charmed with the pleasant walks and lovely views that are to be enjoyed close at hand. By ascending a not very steep and not very long hill, the valley of the upper Hudson presents at one glance a scene of natural beauty and active industry. At the north lies the busy city of Troy with its cloud of smoke by day, and pillar of fire by night, indicating the presence of enormous iron works, soon to be added to by the immense establishment on Breaker island, near enough to interest but not near enough to annoy. Southward, sitting upon her four sloping hills the Capital city, crowned with the grandest and noblest of legislative buildings, shows her domes and spires plainly against the sky; while still further southward rolls silently towards the sea, the Hudson river, its bosom dotted here and there with swift sailing steamers, or slowly moving tows; its banks luxuriant with the products of the soil.

The walks about Menands are delightful, and one does not become worn out in reaching them. If you are of pensive mood a stroll of less than a mile northward leads to the Rural cemetery, widely noted for its natural and acquired lovliness. It can also be reached by the road westward, and passing through the southern entrance. This approach has the advantage of bringing one directly

upon the most sightly section of the cemetery, and the spot most inquired for, as upon it stands Palmer's great work of art, "The Angel at the Sepulchre," admitted to be one of the finest pieces of out-doors statuary in America.

From the southern entrance of the cemetery the Van Rensselaer boulevard stretches southward to Albany, affording a drive or walk along the ridge, from which the views are superb. It is on this avenue that "Fritz Villa" the $300,000 home of Joseph K. Emmet, the actor, is situated.

Another pleasant walk is across the meadows to Island park, through fields of melons, squashes, corn, etc., which grow luxuriantly on the soil enriched each year by the overflow of the Hudson, and worth $1,000 an acre for market gardening. From the bridge across an arm of the Hudson, turn and look through the trees towards Albany and admire, as you must, the view of the city and the intervening fields, with the capitol looming up like a mountain in the back-ground. The park itself, busy and noisy in race week, is usually quiet and peaceful. It is well cared for, and a pretty stretch of turf, over which it is a pleasure to walk, and especially delightful is the path, under the giant trees, leading to the bank of the main channel of the river.

Should a longer walk be desired, the ramble can be extended to Pleasure island, a notable resort in the summer, from which the music of a band, "by distance mellowed," floats dreamily in the air each afternoon and evening.

Just south of Menands, on the Van Rensselaer estate and adjoining the Durant property, is a grove on high ground, where the trees are not thick enough to prevent the grass from growing fresh and green, presenting the appearance of a fine old English park, while the views are similar to those just mentioned.

Near by is the Home for Aged Men, a quiet retreat for those who are

> Only waiting till the shadows
> Are a little longer grown,
> Only waiting till the glimmer
> Of the day's last beam is gone.

The impression that one carries away from Menands is this: Here is a place quiet enough for a home, with beautiful and healthful surroundings—yet so near to the busy world that one feels he is of it, and yet not in it. Within sight, or almost within sight, are two

great cities, two railroads, the much traveled Troy road, a line of horse cars, the steamboats of the Hudson and the traffic of the Erie and Champlain canals. Life, activity, business, are close at hand, forbidding all feeling of loneliness, and yet the retirement is as perfect as in a country hamlet "twelve miles from a lemon," or forty miles from any where.

* * *

Why, then, it may naturally be asked, with all these advantages, has not Menands grown more rapidly?

The answer is not hard to find. The owners do not care to have it grow. They are satisfied as it is, and building lots have not often been for sale.

Recently a notable exception has been made. Part of the Durant estate lying within four minutes walk south of the station has been laid out with a view to building. This property extends from the Troy road, where it borders on the grounds of the Old Men's Home, westward, nearly to the Van Rensselaer boulevard. In the midst of a beautiful grove, in about the centre of the property is situated "Brookside," the family residence. It takes its name from a little streamlet that

> —chatters, chatters as it flows
> To join the brimming river,

tumbling down a wild and romantic ravine only a few rods west of the house, then turning southward through a pasture and across the Troy road, runs among the meadows to the Hudson.

It was the idea of the late Mrs. Durant, who resided in this lovely spot, that it would be a pleasant thing to see growing up near her a neighborhood of congenial people; and with this end in view she caused a map to be made of that part of the property east of the grove to the Troy road, (see page 11) and the land to be laid out in villa lots of half an acre or more, each. Through the centre, or near the centre of this tract runs "Brookside avenue," the private road, which bordered with trees, extends from the gate and little lodge at the Troy road, back to the residence in the grove. This is 70 feet wide, including sidewalks outside the trees, and forms a noble approach to the lots, as they all front on this avenue, extending back from 135 to 260 feet on either side. Their width is from 65 to 75 feet. They are situated on both sides of the D. & H. railroad track, and could not be better suited for building than they are.

50'
245'8"
No 29
65'6"
236'10"
No 28
65'6"
228'
No 27
65'
220'
No 26
65'
212'
No 25
62'8"
204'
No 24
62'8"
196'
70'
268'4
No 1
264'3
No 3
260'2"
No 4
257'
No 5
254'2"
No 6
251'1"
248'
R & S
R R Co
BROOKSIDE AVE.
No 23
No 22
No 21
No 20
No 19
No 18
No 17
No 16
No 15
No 14
No 13
No 7
No 8
No 9
No 10
No 11
No 12
WATERVLIET TURNPIKE

Four or five of these lots had been sold, and negotiations were going on for others, when suddenly, without a moment's warning the owner died, leaving the estate in such condition that until now, no titles could be given, and of course, all sales stopped. Arrangements have recently been made by which the lots will now be disposed of to desirable purchasers.*

It is the intention of the heirs to carry out their mother's ideas in regard to the little neighborhood as far as possible; and the lots will be sold subject to such simple restriction, as will serve that end. Three tasteful cottages have already been built and occupied, and it is likely a number more will be erected the coming summer.

* * *

The anxious seeker for a home, after investigating thus far, will not as he goes back to the city, feel like settling down to his present half-life without an earnest inquiry as to the possibility of something better for himself and his family. He will find on reflection, that the savings which he is so carefully putting away in the bank, are bringing him very little return—possibly 3½ per cent; that is, on a thousand, just $35 a year, with the prospect that it will be still less in the future, as the banks find paying investments grow scarcer and scarcer. Supposing he has saved $4,000, the interest amounts to $140 a year. He is paying from $250 to $300 for a very ordinary rent subject to more annoyances than he and his wife can count. It finally flashes upon him that with this $4,000 or even $3,000 he can, perhaps, own a cottage and garden of his own.

That thought is a revelation. What is the paltry $140 a year compared with the enlargement of life that comes from the possession of a real home with all the comforts that have only here been hinted at? A home for which landlords and the first of May have no terrors; a home which it will be a constant delight to improve and beautify; a home which, come what may, is yours in sickness or health, a shelter, a refuge and castle; a home for which your true wife will bless you all her days, and your children will remember, as you remember the spot where you were born.

"But, suppose anything happens, and all my money is invested in a house and lot, what then? Suppose I lose my income for any cause; suppose the bread-winner of the family is disabled, or taken

*Further particulars in relation to these lots can be had of Andrew W. Woolverton, 40 State street, or Weir & Chism, 74 State street, Albany.

COTTAGE COSTING $3,500—FROM "ARTISTIC HOMES."*

away by death?"—Well, the money has not been thrown away. If the house is economically and honestly built at prevailing low prices, there will always be one hundred cents to show for every dollar invested, at least; and there is every prospect that values in this locality will largely increase in the near future. Situated between two great and growing cities, as near to one, practically, as to the other, with the constant and increasing demand in both for homes like these, such property certainly cannot depreciate; while a house not sold, could be rented a hundred times a year, at Menands, at 10 per cent. on its cost. The investment is safer, therefore, than any bank, and pays better and is easily convertible.

But suppose the home-seeker doesn't have the $4,000 or the $3,000? That is unfortunate, of course; but if he has a tolerably certain income which warrants his paying $300 rent in the city, and has a thousand or more dollars ahead, the home is still possible; for with a cash payment for a lot it is comparatively easy to get the house built, giving a mortgage therefor and paying it as fast as possible. The interest at 5 or 6 per cent., and the insurance and taxes

*This design and those on the cover of this pamphlet, are used by kind permission of Fuller & Wheeler, architects, Albany, N. Y.; also publishers of "Artistic Homes," from which the designs are taken.

(country rates) would not amount to as much as is paid out for rent; and the inducement thus created to save money, to resist the temptations to spend it foolishly, is worth considerable.

It is possible, for $3,000 to build and furnish neatly a cottage of seven or eight rooms, heat them all with an improved heater, put in hot and cold water, bath-room, water closet, etc., a bay-window, a cellar under the entire house; in short, make a home good enough for anybody to live in. If the plumbing and heater are dispensed with, it can be done for $300 or $400 less.

* * *

Once established at Menands, the expense of living is no greater than in the city.

Car fare, by the very liberal arrangements of the Delaware & Hudson Canal Company, is afforded at only six cents to or from Albany, where ten tickets are bought at a time; to and from Troy, in the same way, seven cents. The Albany and West Troy horse cars are also available, and are convenient when one happens to miss a train and does not wish to wait an hour for the next one. The time from the foot of State street, Albany, to Brookside avenue, Menands, by horse cars is 35 minutes; fare 8 cents.

Marketing is done at the door. So good a grocer as W. H. Coughtry (corner Eagle and Hamilton streets, Albany), sends a team once a week to take orders which are promptly filled the next day. Meat is brought to the door three times, and fish, etc., once or twice a week. Good and pure milk can be had of the neighbors. Coal is delivered from Albany or West Troy at the same price asked in either place. Ice can also be had, but with cool well water and good cellars, it is not the necessary that it is in the city.

The mail is delivered twice a day by the Albany carriers. Telephone connection can be had with Troy or Albany.

Water can be had for the digging, at from ten to fifteen feet below the surface, and running water could, at no great expense, be introduced in all the houses on the Durant estate, from a reservoir on the hill. Meantime, the system of Philadelphia gutters in the roof, which convey the rain water to a tank in the attic, the overflow going to a cistern in the cellar, combined with the sub-surface irrigation method of disposing of the sewage, answers all purposes.

The objection of servant girls to living in the country does not apply, for there are enough of them already, not to find it lonesome,

while the conveniences for going to church, and transportation for their friends are just as open to them as to anybody.

A good common school is taught only a little way from the station; but many prefer to send their children to the city, and under the careful eyes of the conductors they ride too and fro in perfect safety, and at small expense.

Religious privileges at Menands include an active and flourishing mission at the school house, in which Messrs. Dickson, Sliter, Waterman, and others, are deeply interested. Connected with it are a Sunday school, regular prayer-meeting, Chautauqua Literary Circle, etc., with preaching quite frequently. (Steps are being taken to convert the mission into a church, which will no doubt be done at an early day.) There is also preaching by the city pastors about every other Sunday, at the Old Men's Home, to which the neighbors are always welcome. The trains run on Sunday morning on purpose to accommodate church-goers, and the horse cars run at frequent intervals all day Sunday and in the evening.

Of course, objections can be raised to any place on earth, the Garden of Eden not excepted. We all remember the man who complained of a place, that he couldn't sleep in it, because of the noise of the nightingales; and for such troubles there is no cure, and for such complainers no happiness.

"Yes; it is all very well in summer, no doubt; but in winter—." How many will say this, and think all they say and a great deal more. No place in this climate is as pleasant in the winter as it is in the spring, summer and autumn, but fortunately this arrangement is as three to one. The difference, however, between the city and the suburb in the matter of comfort in the winter, is greatly in the imagination. A warm house is needed in both places; and it can be had. Plenty of coal is needed in both places; and it costs no more in the one than in the other. Roads are quickly broken in both places, and while the snow is not so thoroughly removed in the suburb as in the city, neither is the sidewalk of earth such a snare and a pitfall as are flags and bricks. How can any one, compelled to climb up and clamber down the slippery sidewalks of the hills of Albany, imagine anything more disagreeable or more dangerous to the pedestrian? Broken bones lurk in every rod.

All the pleasures of winter are enhanced rather than diminished at Menands. It was on the Menand road that the peculiarly Al-

banian pastime of "bobbing" first received an impetus, and here nature has provided, free to all, toboggan slides more desirable and less dangerous than those in the city. The canal affords the best of skating and a favorite place for speeding horses. Theatres, concerts, lectures, etc., are made convenient by return trains on the belt line at 10 and 11 o'clock, and by a recent arrangement the 11:30 D. & H. express going north has orders to stop at Menands to let off passengers who notify the conductor to that effect. This road has adopted a most liberal policy, granting every reasonable request for accommodation that has been made, and no doubt, as the place grows and travel increases, these facilities will be still further increased. No one need give up acquaintance, church, society, lodge or club by removing to Menands.

H. P. Phelps.

A $4,000 COTTAGE.

[From Fuller & Wheeler's "Artistic Homes."]

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